

Pure gold 'Maple Leaf' outshines them all

By Roger Boye

Here are answers to more questions about coins and currency.

Q—We're planning to invest in 1-ounce gold coins. Are there any technical differences between a Canadian "Maple Leaf" and a U.S. "American Eagle"? Also, what are the specifications of a silver Eagle?

C.M., Springfield

A—The Maple Leaf contains .9999 fine gold while the Eagle is .9167 pure. Uncle Sam adds small amounts of silver and copper to the gold, which strengthen the alloy and enhance the golden hue. Both coins include a troy ounce of gold, but the Eagle is slightly heavier because of the added metals.

A silver Eagle has one troy ounce of .9999 fine silver.

Q—We bought five old silver dollars—all in uncirculated condition—as an investment. Since then, another dealer told us the coins were not worth what we paid because of "weak strikes." What's wrong with our keep-sakes?

G.B., Chicago

A—Your dollars probably lack

detail in the high spots of the design because of sloppy work in the minting process. "Weak strikes" almost always are worth less on the hobby market than sharp-looking specimens.

Q—How can I learn about mis-struck coins, such as Lincoln cents with double lettering?

R.W., Joliet

A—Consider joining CONECA, a 1,000-member national organization for error-coin collectors. Dues are \$14 annually, which include a subscription to a monthly magazine called Errorscope. For more information, write to CONECA life member Mark Lighterman, 9230 S.W. 59th St., Miami, Fla. 33137.

Q—We've got several \$2 bills, including some from series 1963 and 1976. How much are they worth? What dates are most valuable? Are \$2 bills still printed?

P.L., Chicago

A—The series 1963 and 1976 notes might retail for as much as \$4 each if in crisp, uncirculated condition. However, such bills command little special value on the wholesale market because they are common among dealers.

Catalogues indicate that the series 1928-A note retails for as

much as \$130 uncirculated while the series 1928-B goes for about \$400. They are the two rarest deuce notes from the past 60 years.

Uncle Sam last printed \$2 bills a decade ago.

● Dozens of old coins will be sold at auction on Nov. 1 at the annual show of the Oak Park Coin Club. Hours are 2 to 5 p.m. at the Longfellow Park Recreation Center, Ridgeland Avenue and Adams Street in Oak Park. Club members also will exhibit collectibles and award door prizes; admission is free.